

Educational Technology Management (ETM)

Discover how top school districts are advancing 21st century learning.



With Questeq's ETM service, districts can advance use of technology to boost student achievement, regardless of budget or transformation starting point.



Avonworth School District

Current Enrollment: 1,570 students with 12% on free or reduced lunch.

Behind the scenes is a proactive and flexible IT customer experience philosophy that encourages an "organic" vs. mandatory adoption of technology by teachers. Senior administration, the IT team and a teacher-led technology committee work together to dramatically enhance student engagement with Chromebooks, the Cloud and the Google Apps and Google Classroom suite.

See page 2 of this case study for "the rest of the story."

District adopts proactive IT customer experience philosophy. Implements Google LMS that dramatically improves student engagement.

Challenge

With a goal of dramatically improving student achievement and engagement, the Avonworth School district desired to move to a more systemic use of technology district-wide.

Action

Prior to 2013, the availability and reliability of technology tools was a concern. Questeq was contracted to become the educational technology partner of Avonworth. Since that time, the Questeq team has stabilized the IT department and strengthened the district's IT infrastructure (Network, Wireless, Content Filter, Email). The district has also embarked on the implementation of Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education in grades 6-12. A key part of this successful story is how the IT director and teachers worked together to facilitate widespread use of Google tools.

Results

Technology use is very evident and totally integrated into students' school days. Today, nearly every level of the Avonworth Middle School curriculum is utilizing the Google Apps/Google Classroom suite, and use is rapidly spreading in the high school. Student collaboration is encouraged inside and outside the classroom, and increased engagement is creating a better student work product. Some teachers have even gone totally paperless. It is anticipated that surveyed teachers will reveal greater satisfaction as compared with a benchmark taken before the Google implementation.

See page 2 of this case study for "the rest of the story."

The Rest of the Story

Avonworth and Questeq have embraced a proactive and flexible IT customer experience philosophy that encourages an “organic” vs. mandatory adoption of technology by teachers. Senior administration, the IT team and a teacher-led technology committee work together to dramatically enhance student engagement with Chromebooks, the Cloud and the Google Apps and Google Classroom suite.

Technology Is Very Evident and is Totally Integrated Into Students’ Days.

A typical day begins with a hip and energetic student-produced newscast, delivering the day’s announcements via interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. Technology is very much in use and is totally integrated into students’ days, as shown in these examples:

- When students go to English classrooms, they’re instructed to use the available Chromebooks to share and peer-review writing assignments. The peer editing process has been simplified as students share their work while using Google Docs to make comments and revisions.
- Other teachers use Google Classroom as a way of providing information on sources that they want their students to access when researching a topic. This method provides a model for students to evaluate topics using valid information sources.
- Forgotten flash drives are no longer an issue, as everything created in Google Apps is automatically saved to the cloud. That means each student can access and edit email, documents, calendars and resources from anywhere on almost any device.

Teachers are able to give more one-on-one time when needed, and the increased peer collaboration has led to better projects and more student engagement.

Years Ago, Technology was Fragmented

Early on, Avonworth leveraged grants that supplied some laptop carts and interactive whiteboards for classroom use. But, prior to 2013, the availability and reliability of technology tools was a concern for many teachers within the district. Educators were still enthusiastic about using technology but couldn’t always count on having the tools available when needed. Technology was fragmented. A systemic approach to technology was needed.

The Right Partner and Infrastructure

In 2012 the district appointed new superintendent, Dr. Thomas Ralston, and soon after Questeq became the Educational Technology Management partner of Avonworth. Since then, the district hasn’t looked back and continues to re-envision its educational technology strategy.

The Questeq team stabilized the IT department (rightsized staff and skills), and strengthened the district’s IT infrastructure (Network, Wireless, Content Filter, Email) over the first year enabling the visionary Technology Director and team to focus on implementing strategic initiatives.

The Google LMS Strategic Initiative

As part of the new strategy, the district implemented HP Chromebooks and the Google Apps for Education Suite for students in grades 6-12. The district more recently implemented Google Classroom. Due to the increased availability and reliability of their technology, teachers have renewed confidence to use these tools more frequently in the classroom.

Organic Vs. Mandatory Use of Technology

“You can’t be too ambitious because technology will not be adopted if teachers are forced to move beyond their comfort level,” said Avonworth Superintendent Tom Ralston, Ed.D. “Teachers are very concerned about their time, and adding new things to their plate can be very concerning.” In line with this, Dr. Ralston allowed the use of technology to grow organically.

See page 3 of this case study for “the rest of the story.”

The initial work to set up the Google Apps for Education Suite took place over the summer of 2014. In the spring prior, the IT Team formed a small teacher pilot group, facilitating communication over the summer break.

When school opened, the technology team took the time to train students and teachers classroom by classroom on using the Google tools. Originally, the Chromebooks were used for math classrooms. The technology team leveraged the successes of the early adopters, and the desire for training and classroom devices spread rapidly.

Results

Technology use is very evident and integrated into students' school days. Nearly every classroom of Avonworth's Middle School is using Google Apps and the Google Classroom suite use is rapidly spreading in the high school. Student collaboration is increasing inside and outside the classroom, and student engagement is creating a better student work product. Some teachers have even gone totally paperless. It is anticipated that surveyed teachers will reveal a greater satisfaction level compared with a benchmark taken before the Google implementation.

"We're very pleased with the trajectory we're on," said Superintendent Thomas Ralston, Ed.D. "There's certainly a risk with moving to outsourcing, but at the end of the day, teachers want a high level of service. We've continued to evolve as an institution, and our relationship with Questeq has enabled that to take place."

Ultimately the district hopes to create blended opportunities for learning, where a balance of in-classroom and at-home study better meets the needs of today's learners.

Avonworth is one of the fastest growing districts in the Pittsburgh area and opened a brand new primary center for students in grades K-2 for the 2014-15 school year. In addition, Avonworth was selected to join the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools. Great things are happening for students at Avonworth and Questeq is privileged to partner with them on this journey.

